station and telegraph office, and were in control of the city, with headquarters in the Imperial Palace. The news was of stupendous importance. Gatchina had a garrison of some twenty thousand men reputed to be in sympathy with the Communists. The fact that Krasnov could occupy this city with some three hundred Cossacks showed that the new government had no power outside the capital.

Krasnov urged me to send reinforcements at once; he could not advance with the forces at his disposal. I knew, of course, that the outcome of the expedition depended on speed. But several companies ready to join the task force were stopped by regiments favoring the coup in Petrograd. Others had reached the railroad but could not proceed because of sabotage by railroad workers. A delegation from the Military Revolutionary Committee again appeared in my office. They explained that politically they supported the Communists in Petrograd but were against the participation of the army in the squabble. They asked me to stop the movement of the troops to Petrograd, promising on their part to abstain from sending reinforcements to the revolutionary garrison.

Since we then had at least thirty trains loaded with soldiers and equipment and my purpose was to move them as quickly as possible, I insisted on my original formula of neutrality. The army as such would take no part in the conflict in Petrograd, but single outfits and individuals would be free to support either side on a voluntary basis. My main purpose in raising the question of the two forms of neutrality was to gain time. We talked at length, and the delegation left to discuss my proposal. I spent the day at the direct wire, receiving reports from the echelons and answering questions from the front. The echelons made slow progress; some had been stopped and wired asking for permission to unload. I tried to persuade them not to desert the cause of freedom. New units declared their willingness to join our operation. Communist agitators appeared in the barracks, assailing the policy of neutrality.

A telegram arrived from Petrograd: Lenin asked me to join the new Council of the People's Commissars as War Minister and Supreme Commander. I did not know whether this offer was a trap or what other motives had made Lenin think of me in these hectic days, but I considered the upheaval in Petrograd as a deadly blow to democracy and freedom in Russia, and I was absorbed with the task of mustering enough armed forces to keep the revolt from spreading. I therefore did not reply.